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SUBJECT: CHARGE INTRODUCTORY CAL ON COL. VALL

CLASSIFIED BY: CDA CHARLES H. TWINING. REASONS: 1.4 (B), (D)

(C) SUMMARY

-- IN HIS INTRODUCTORY CALL ON MILITARY COUNCIL LEADER VALL, CHARGE PRAISED THE ATMOSPHERE IN WHICH THE NOVEMBER 19 ELECTIONS WERE CONDUCTED.

-- VALL LAID OUT HIS VISION OF A MULTI-PARTY DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM, AND SAID HE EXPECTS THE MILITARY TO RETURN TO THE BARRACKS ONCE THE TRANSITION IS COMPLETE. HE DID LEAVE OPEN THE QUESTION OF THE MILITARY INTERVENING AGAIN IF THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS GOES OFF TRACK.

-- VALL STRESSED THE STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE FOR MAURITANIA FOR CONTINUED CLOSE COOPERATION WITH THE U.S. AND ASKED THAT THE USG "LOOK TO THE FUTURE" WHEN ASSESSING ITS RELATIONS WITH MAURITANIA.

(C) COMMENTS

-- VALL APPEARED EXTREMELY RELAXED AND WAS OBVIOUSLY SATISFIED WITH THE RESULTS OF THE ELECTIONS.

-- WHILE HIS COMMENTS INDICATE THAT HE HAS GIVEN CONSIDERABLE THOUGHT TO MAURITANIA'S DEMOCRATIC EVOLUTION, THE MILITARY'S NEW ROLE STILL NEEDS TO BE MADE CLEAR.

END SUMMARY AND COMMENTS.

¶1. (U) CHARGE MADE AN INTRODUCTORY CALL ON MILITARY COUNCIL FOR JUSTICE AND DEMOCRACY (CMJD) PRESIDENT COL. ELY OULD MOHAMED VALL ON NOVEMBER 23, ACCOMPANIED BY DCM. NO ONE ELSE WAS PRESENT ON THE MAURITANIAN SIDE, AND THE MEETING WAS HELD IN VALL'S PRIVATE OFFICE.

VALL'S VISION OF THE FUTURE

¶2. (C) VALL BEGAN THE DISCUSSION BY GIVING FOUR ELEMENTS NECESSARY TO HAVE A STABLE DEMOCRACY IN MAURITANIA.

¶3. (C) THE FIRST IS THE QUESTION OF NATIONAL IDENTITY. MAURITANIANS MUST SEE THEMSELVES AS CITIZENS OF MAURITANIA, AND NOT IDENTIFY THEMSELVES BY TRIBE OR ETHNIC GROUP. NOTING THAT TRIBAL AND ETHNIC ISSUES CROSS BORDERS, MAURITANIA WOULD BE DRAGGED INTO PROBLEMS "GOING ALL THE WAY TO ZAIRE" IF MAURITANIA CANNOT PUT ITS NATIONAL INTERESTS FIRST. HE ADMITTED THERE WAS STILL MUCH WORK TO BE DONE TO ENSURE ALL MAURITANIANS HAVE THEIR FULL RIGHTS.

14. (C) SECOND, DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS MUST BE STRENGTHENED, MOST IMPORTANTLY THE PEOPLES' RIGHT TO CHANGE THEIR GOVERNMENT, IN ORDER TO BREAK THE CYCLE OF ONE-PARTY STATES AND MILITARY GOVERNMENTS.

15. (C) THIRD, POLITICAL PARTIES NEED TO BE BASED ON PLATFORMS AND POSITIONS, RATHER THAN ON PERSONALITIES. HE NOTED THAT FIVE MAJOR PARTY HEADS WITH WHOM HE RECENTLY MET WERE ALL AT ONE TIME MEMBERS OF THE FORMER RULING PARTY AND EVEN FORMER MINISTERS. THEY HAD ONLY RECENTLY JOINED THE OPPOSITION, AND WERE BENEFITING FROM THE NEW CIRCUMSTANCES. ALL THEY NEED TO SAY IS "IM FOR CHANGE" WITHOUT TAKING ANY POSITIONS AND GET VOTES, A POSITION HE CLEARLY FOUND LESS THAN USEFUL.

16. (C) FINALLY, CITIZENS MUST ASSUME THEIR RESPONSIBILITY AND VOTE FOR CANDIDATES WHO WILL CONTINUE WITH THE PROGRESS MADE AND ESCHEW CANDIDATES (HE SPECIFICALLY MENTIONED ISLAMISTS) WHO ARE OPPORTUNISTIC AND "WILL PUT DEMOCRACY IN DANGER" THROUGH "ADVENTURISM."

SATISFIED WITH ELECTION RESULTS

17. (C) CHARGE PRAISED THE CONDUCT OF THE ELECTIONS. VALL SAID THAT DESPITE THE COMPLEXITIES OF THE VOTING, THE ELECTION SUCCEEDED BECAUSE THE PROCESS WAS TRANSPARENT, WHICH IS THE ONLY WAY TO ELIMINATE FRICTION AND BUILD CONFIDENCE BETWEEN THE PEOPLE, THE STATE, AND THE POLITICAL PARTIES. NEUTRALITY WAS A FUNDAMENTAL FACTOR IN THE SUCCESS OF THE ELECTIONS AS WERE THE INDEPENDENT BODIES SUCH AS THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION AND THE PRESS AND BROADCAST MEDIA AUTHORITY. THE PROOF THAT THE ELECTIONS WERE CREDIBLE WAS IN THE DIVERSE RESULTS: NO PARTY OR GROUP WON AN EXCESSIVELY LARGE AMOUNT OF VOTES.

POST-TRANSITION CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS

18. (C) CHARGE SAID THE ELECTIONS WERE A SIGNIFICANT STEP FORWARD TO THE SUCCESSFUL CONCLUSION OF THE DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION, AND THAT THE USG IS ALREADY HOPING TO RESTORE FULL COOPERATION WITH THE NEW ELECTED GOVERNMENT. IN THAT REGARD, ONE ELEMENT WE WILL BE EXAMINING WILL BE THE CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONSHIP. CHARGE ASKED VALL'S VIEW ON THE MILITARY ROLE IN THE NEW DEMOCRACY.

19. (C) NOT RESPONDING DIRECTLY, VALL EXPRESSED HIS LONG-HELD POSITION THAT THE MILITARY DID NOT CONDUCT THE COUP IN ORDER TO SEIZE AND HOLD POWER, BUT AS A RESPONSE TO EVENTS THAT WERE HEADING THE COUNTRY INTO CHAOS. HE ADMITTED, HOWEVER, THAT THE MILITARY WAS A "PRISONER OF PERCEPTION." HE SAID RATHER EMPHATICALLY THAT THE MILITARY DOES NOT WANT TO STAY IN POWER BUT IS READY TO GO BACK TO ITS BARRACKS.

110. (C) THE PRESIDENT WARNED THAT TRUE DEMOCRACY WAS THE ONLY WAY TO AVOID ANOTHER COUP. "THERE WILL BE CLEAR CONSEQUENCES IF THE POLITICAL CLASS FALLS BACK INTO THE OLD WAYS. THEN NOTHING CAN KEEP THE MILITARY OUT."

111. (C) VALL NOTED THAT THE PEOPLE WILL EXPECT TO SEE CLEAR PROGRESS FROM THE NEW GOVERNMENT. IF THE NEW GOVERNMENT IS SEEN AS TRYING TO BENEFIT FROM THE SPOILS OF POWER RATHER THAN WORKING FOR THE PEOPLE, IT WILL CREATE FRUSTRATION AND DESTABILIZATION. THE TREND OF THE GOVERNMENT BEING ETHICAL AND USING THE NATIONS WEALTH FOR THE SERVICE OF THE PEOPLE MUST CONTINUE. THE TRANSITIONAL GOVERNMENT HAS TAKEN SEVERAL STEPS IN GOOD GOVERNANCE, THE PRESIDENT SUGGESTED, ESPECIALLY IN PROTECTING OIL AND MINING REVENUES. IF THE NEW GOVERNMENT GOES BACKWARDS, IT ALONE CAN BE BLAMED FOR WHAT HAPPENS NEXT. DEMOCRACY IS THE ONLY WAY TO AVOID INSTABILITY. "THEY MUST BE SINCERE AND DEMOCRACY IS THE ONLY ANSWER."

112. (C) VALL SAID THE POLITICAL PARTIES MUST ALSO RISE TO THE OCCASION. HE HAS CONFIDENCE IN THE PEOPLE, WHO CAME OUT IN MASSIVE NUMBERS TO VOTE -- 73 PCT. THE TURNOUT WAS EXTREMELY

HIGH AMONG WOMEN AND THE YOUNG. WHEN GIVEN A REAL CHOICE,
THEY WILL MAKE THE CORRECT CHOICE.

U.S.-MAURITANIA RELATIONS

¶13. (C) CHARGE PURSUED THE QUESTION OF FUTURE EXPANSION OF
BILATERAL COOPERATION. VALL SAID HE UNDERSTOOD THE USG AND AU
POSITIONS ON THE COUP AS ONES OF PRINCIPLE AND LEGAL
FRAMEWORKS. HOWEVER, CLOSE RELATIONS WITH THE U.S. IS A
STRATEGIC DECISION FOR MAURITANIA GIVEN OUR CONTINUING SHARED
ECONOMIC AND SECURITY CONCERNS. THEREFORE THE U.S. MUST LOOK
TO THE FUTURE IN ITS RELATIONS. MAURITANIA WILL CHANGE
PROFOUNDLY IN THE MONTHS AND YEARS AHEAD. COUNTRIES THAT
HAVE SHARED STRATEGIC INTERESTS MUST HAVE GOOD RELATIONS WITH
THE U.S. IN TURN, THE UNITED STATES MUST CONTINUE TO HELP
MAURITANIA ACHIEVE THE OBJECTIVE OF DEMOCRACY IN THE BEST WAY
POSSIBLE. MAURITANIA IS PREPARED TO WORK "IN THE CLOSEST
POSSIBLE COLLABORATION (EN CONCERTATION LA PLUS ABSOLUE)" HE
CONCLUDED.

MEETING WITH PRIME MINISTER

¶14. (C) CHARGE PAID AN INTRODUCTORY COURTESY CALL ON PRIME
MINISTER SIDI MOHAMED OULD BOUBACAR LATER ON NOVEMBER 23. PM
BOUBACAR THANKED THE USG FOR ITS SUPPORT FOR MAURITANIA'S
DEBT CANCELLATION UNDER MDRI AND FOR ITS BACKING FOR THE NEW
IMF PROGRAM TO BE IMPLEMENTED IN DECEMBER.
TWINING